2017

Career Development and Personal Success Profile of Students - Followers and Students - Potential Future Leaders: The Case of RIT Croatia

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CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND PERSONAL SUCCESS PROFILE OF STUDENTS - FOLLOWERS AND STUDENTS - POTENTIAL FUTURE LEADERS: THE CASE OF RIT CROATIA

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Received: 2. 6. 2017
Accepted: 30. 10. 2017

Preliminary communication
UDC 005.966-057.875<001.87

ABSTRACT

This study examines the differences among students in terms of self-reported leadership characteristics. It was conducted among all three programs and four generations of undergraduates at RIT Croatia. The goal of this study is to determine the differences among students who report being more and less leadership prone (Potential Future Leaders and Followers, respectively) with regard to demographic characteristics, reported self-reliance socialization pattern, college level and program choice, career focus attainment and development, and reported attitudes regarding the importance of specific personality traits in leadership, the importance of specific career development factors and success indicators. Research showed that generation and college program are not related to student reported leadership proneness, suggesting that college education's impact on leadership traits is not significant. Only one socio-demographic factor considered was significantly different between clusters; namely, the respondents who had moved once were significantly more represented in the Potential Future Leaders cluster, suggesting that study-abroad programs might play a role in leadership development. In terms of ranking career development factors, success indicators, the importance of emotional stability and openness to experience as a specific leadership trait, Potential Future Leaders reported higher scores in comparison with Followers cluster, potentially resulting from their forward-looking, goal-oriented attitude.

Keywords: *Leadership characteristics, Student leadership profile, Student development, Career development, Personal success.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Theoretical background

The major challenge that inspired this study is how educators might facilitate student leadership development and how they might understand and improve student experiences in creating and developing a leadership identity. Engaging in leadership roles as an adolescent improves one's chances of getting into college and has a positive impact on future earnings (Kuhn and Weinberger,

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2005). Early experiences create the foundation for future leadership development to build on because of the greater ability for development to occur at a young age and the self-reinforcing nature of leader development (Murphy and Johnson, 2011). According to Bornstein (1989), the *sensitive period* in one's life is the time when skills are more easily and rapidly developed. The effects of early influences need not be seen immediately, and may only become easily observed in adulthood (Bornstein, 1989).

Rainie and Horrigan (2005) argue that while civic participation and corresponding development among the young may have declined in conventional spheres, alternative forms of community building, social engagement and identity building in the form of different patterns of political involvement, volunteering and the use of the internet are emerging among young people. For example, disaffection with political engagement is balanced by record levels of volunteering and community service by the young (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1997). A number of researchers address the importance of improving and developing student leadership by training (Holdsworth, 2005; Mitra, 2005; Ricketts and Dudd, 2002; Thomson and Holdsworth, 2003) but more deal with youth leadership directly, or indirectly as a topic (Keller, 2003; Arvey et al., 2006; Bartone et al., 2007; Ligon et al., 2008; Avolio et al., 2009; and Popper & Amit, 2009).

Leadership development in higher education gained significant attention over the past three decades (Day et al., 2014). There are a number of college programs wishing to understand and develop the next generation of leaders (DeRue et al., 2011). One of the reasons for this is the pursuit of Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accreditation, which requires alignment of the mission of the business program with the mission of the institution. For example, if the mission is *Shaping future leaders* then it requires the development and implementation of an adequate curriculum in order to accomplish the business program mission. On the other side, the AACSB strives to continuously improve engagement among business, faculty, institutions, and students so that business education is aligned with the business practice needs, and, as a result, business schools will have a positive impact on business and society. Furthermore, AACSB International will amplify that impact (AACSB International, n.d.).

While considering mentoring in business, Luecke and Ibarra (2004) pointed out how important timely coaching is for enhancing effective manager teams' performance. Coaching and mentoring help employees grow professionally and achieve their goals. Therefore, managers need to learn how to master special mentoring challenges, improve listening skills, and provide ongoing support to their employees. Within an education environment, professors and the administration should do the same, providing students with support and enhancing the development of their potential. Additionally, Ibarra (2015a) in her book "Act like a leader, think like a leader" outlines a path to successful leadership based on the idea that direct action changes the way people think.

White (2017) introduces and describes another route to leadership, a holistic Leadership and Professional Development model (LPD model) for undergraduate students. This model has universal application across all disciplines and functional areas of organizations due to its emphasis on the non-technical skill requirements of leadership.

One could also say that the proposed model combines and highlights the development of intrapersonal, interpersonal and professionalism skills or KSAs (knowledge, skills and abilities), but also structures the large number of traits, behaviors and could be applied in the early stages of career development.

Petriglieri and Petriglieri (2015) examine how and why business schools might be complicit in a growing dehumanization of leadership. They argue there is a growing disconnect between leaders, followers, and the institutions they are meant to serve. According to Petriglieri and Petriglieri (2015), leadership should be humanized by making the examination of the meaning of leadership as education's primary effort. In order to do so, theories and teaching methods should be revisited but so should our identities as scholars and instructors because education is a mutual process.

According to Mintzberg (2004), we need leaders with human skills, not professionals with academic credentials. In larger organizations, especially, success depends not so much on what managers themselves do, but rather on how they help others. Note that Mintzberg (2004) cites that although MBAs constitute approximately 40 percent of CEOs, familiar lists of the most admired business leaders — Buffett, Kelleher, Dell, Gates, Welch and Winfrey — do not include MBAs. In fact, CEOs with MBAs tend to have poor execution and people skills, exactly where their selection and training are the weakest. To be seen as a leader and to see themselves as leaders they have to craft, experiment, and revise their identity in accordance to their group's identity (Carroll and Levy, 2010; Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010) and in order to achieve that students need experience, opportunities and testing of their skills in order to enhance them and to see them work.

1.2. Framework for hypothesis development

As noted, this study was inspired by a major challenge that educators face; namely, how to facilitate student leadership development and how to understand and improve student experiences in creating and developing a leadership identity. This paper represents a modest, but important first step in taking on such a challenge. The aim of this study, then, was to identify leadership potential among members of a student population and to attempt to understand the background reinforcing such potential, as well as future aspirations of individuals who bear it. Specifically, this exploratory study aims to assess whether those students that reported having optimal leadership characteristics differ from their counterparts with less leadership potential with regard to demographic characteristics, generation (year level), reported self-reliance socialization pattern, career focus attainment and development, and reported attitudes regarding importance of specific personality traits in leadership, importance of specific career development factors and success indicators. Therefore, the goal of this study is not to merely reveal the differences between potential leaders and followers, but to unveil in these differences potential areas of improvements in educational models, ways to encourage leadership characteristics in the teaching process and extracurricular activities, and further paths for an in-depth study of leadership development.

The profiles of RIT undergraduate students were based on their scores on a leadership characteristics questionnaire built on Samardžija's (2013) work. The expectation

to find differences among the college students in terms of leadership potential was based on insights of studies already conducted on student populations. The assumption that students become experts in an undergraduate business program is imprudent. According to Allen, Miguel, and Martin (2014), mastery of skills and behaviors associated with leadership and professionalism often take years of practice and experience in the workplace. Similarly, Doh (2003) points out that "as educators we should be skeptical of our ability to mold leaders", because "Leadership clearly requires personal commitments on the part of the learner. We as management educators may spur, promote, cultivate, and develop such commitments, but it is unlikely that we can create them from scratch."

Is there a difference when students become adults and engage in an MBA program? Bennis and O'Toole (2005) looked at business schools and the failures in their curriculum that contribute to a lack of management skills among graduates. By 2005, MBA programs faced intense criticism for failing to impart useful skills, leadership training, failing to instill norms of ethical behavior and even failing to lead graduates to good corporate jobs. Business schools have a twofold mission that includes educating practitioners and creating knowledge through research. According to Bennis and O'Toole (2005), they failed due to the shift of the complete focus on research while little of it had a base in practical applications and management became a science rather than a profession.

Even though this study is primarily an exploratory one and is based on the review of current literature, a number of working hypotheses have been framed. Specifically, in terms of impact of college education on student leadership potential, two hypotheses were proposed:

H1: Leadership potential in students is not related to the year level.

H2: Leadership potential in students is not related to the program of study.

This is not to say that 'leaders are born', i.e. it does not advocate adopting a stance that has been abandoned in leadership studies. The point is to look into experiences and exposure to social contexts and changes that might have affected the leadership proneness in students. From age 6 or 7 to about 22, individuals gradually develop cognition and value judgment (Kegan, 1982) through learning or by participating in various extracurricular activities (Bartone et al., 2007). They gradually start to organize their experiences into more abstract categories, and to view events and things from multiple perspectives. They can consider their own needs in relation to those of others with empathetic understanding and reciprocal obligation (Kegan, 1982). Therefore, experiences, events, and people around them influence the adolescent's development. At the same time, however, we should not neglect education as an important influencing factor over the formation and evolution of leader traits (Brady, 1948; Mitra, 2006). Adolescent leaders are more likely to take up managerial positions as adults, and leadership skills developed early can have a positive impact on future wages (Kuhn & Weinberger, 2005).

A study conducted by Talib et al. (2015) showed that one's self-efficacy level could improve with support, encouragement, and practical experience during the implementation of a career education workshop. This is consistent with Bandura's (1977)

explanation that career planning, career self-efficacy, and career maturity skills can all be acquired through learning and the college environment. This assumption would work if we assumed students had the base and eagerness to develop their leadership potential; however, full student personal commitments on the part of the learner is also needed as well as equal commitment on the educator side in order to make the process efficient. Ünsar and Karalar (2013) investigated the effect of personality traits on leadership behaviors: gender, number of different locations one lives in while young and growing up, educational level of students' parents, and types of high schools which students graduated from were found to affect the adopted leadership styles. Ibarra's (2015b) research speaks to the notion that socio-demographic factors influence one, finding that personal growth in the form of gaining authenticity requires doing "new and different things and interacting with new and different people."

The question that arises from the insight that college education alone does not appear to influence leadership potential is what then is a potential source of the potential detected leadership differences among student populations; namely, is there a relation between leadership proneness detected in some students and experiences that they had apart from transitioning through educational system? In terms of these broader set of experiences, the following hypothesis has been framed:

H3: The effect of socio-demographic factors on leadership potential is significant.

Studies seeking to find relations between personality traits and leadership have been inconsistent. In an attempt to gain a better understanding of possible connections between personality traits and leadership, Judge et al. (2002), using the five-factor or Big Five model as an organizing framework, conducted a meta-analysis of 222 correlations spread over 73 samples. This research found that in most of the analyzed situations the average correlations were not zero. In fact, the Big Five personality traits model exhibited a multiple correlation of .48 with leadership. Specifically, according to the study, the ranking (from the most important trait of leaders to least) of the Big Five personality traits in terms of strength and consistency of correlation to leadership is: Extraversion; Conscientiousness; Openness to Experience; Neuroticism; and Agreeableness.

In terms of career development factors and success indicators, the assumption is that students' attitudes, regardless of the reported leadership proneness, will reflect the wider cultural context and generation-based attitudes regarding careers and success. In the context of exploring paths to career success, positive psychology research provides promising results that support the hypothesis that well-being can bring success in the development of one's career, increasing an individual's chances of finding and maintaining a job that brings satisfaction and autonomy, including being appreciated by superiors and colleagues and exhibiting organizational citizenship (Panc, 2015). This same research has shown that positive psychology intervention exercises that aim to cultivate positive aspects of personality (positive emotions, positive cognitions, and positive behaviors) are successful in increasing well-being (Panc, 2015).

On the other hand, using an exploratory qualitative approach (Consensual Qualitative Research) and a well-researched model of career development (Social Cognitive

Career Theory), Tate et al. (2015) conducted a research among students regarding external influences on and internal beliefs about their career development process. Said research found support for the relationship between enhanced well-being and various outcomes that would describe a successful career – job satisfaction, increased income, appreciation by superiors, positive relations with colleagues, increased autonomy and creativity, and so on (Tate et al., 2015). Mey, Abdullah and Yin (2014) conducted a comparison between real-self and preferred-self traits of postgraduate students. The researchers found that 19 out of the 24 examined traits were significantly higher in the preferred-self than the real-self (optimistic, achievement, dominance, endurance, order, psychologically perceptive, affiliation, exhibition, self-confidence, personal adjustment, self-satisfaction, creativity, structure valuing, masculinity, respectful, work centered, playful, affected, and scientific), indicating that the postgraduate students desired to be stronger in these traits.

As noted, this study, in addition to investigating the differences among leadership prone students and their counterparts in terms of their background, further explores the way in which students differ when it comes to forward-looking appraisal of their future working environment. Namely, the aim was to explore whether the potential future leaders differ from their counterparts in terms of factors that they see as important in the workplace, in terms of leadership, success indicators and career development. More specifically, are these students more sensitive to importance of leadership-related traits exhibited in the workplace, do they display more focus and thoughtfulness in assessing what would help them in their career and mark them as successful. Based on the review of current literature, the following hypotheses were framed:

H4: The students with higher scores on leadership traits will rate leadership-related traits as more important in the workplace.

H5: The effect of leadership potential on career development factors and success indicators scores will not be detected.

1.3. Methods

As noted, the aim of this study was to identify the leadership potential among the members of student population and attempt to understand the background reinforcing such potential, as well as future aspirations of individuals who bear it. A questionnaire was designed in order to assess whether those students that reported having optimal leadership characteristics differ from their counterparts with lesser reported leadership potential with regard to demographic characteristics, generation (year level), reported self-reliance socialization pattern, career focus attainment and development, and reported attitudes regarding the importance of specific personality traits in leadership, the importance of specific career development factors and success indicators. The questionnaires were distributed among the student population at RIT Croatia, to students from all generations and enrolled in three different programs of study.

1.4. Materials and Data Analysis

In order to identify the profiles of RIT undergraduate students based on their leadership characteristics, a questionnaire was

developed using the insights of earlier studies on leadership traits, specifically analyses of interviews conducted with prominent leaders in Croatia (Samardžija, 2013). The leadership characteristics were examined through the first part of the questionnaire administered to students. This part of the questionnaire consisted of a forty-two item, seven-point side-by-side matrix scale (upon analysis reduced to a 38-item scale, α=0.91). The bipolar descriptions used represent optimal leaders' characteristics and their opposites, as obtained from prior research.

The second part of the questionnaire consisted of two sets of seven-point side-by-side matrix scale items in which students were required to report their attitude regarding the level of importance of specific career development factors (sixteen items, α=0.82) and indicators of one's success (11 items, α=0.74). This section also includes a ranking item in which students were required to rate the importance of specific personality traits for effective leadership.

The third part of the questionnaire was a set of nominal scale items: demographic characteristics, reported self-reliance socialization pattern, career focus attainment, and opinions about success.

Cronbach's alpha was applied to assess the internal consistency of each scale set in the instrument. Bipolar seven-point matrix scale results were treated as interval scale data, combined with a more stringent alpha level of .005 to account for potential parameter estimate bias. Multiple classifications were performed to obtain the optimal number of clusters. Hierarchical cluster analysis provided support for a two-cluster solution. K-means cluster analysis was performed making use of the two-cluster solution from the preceding analysis. This analysis placed 226 (66.7%) students into the second cluster, labeled as Potential Future Leaders, and 113 students (33.3%) into the first cluster, labeled as Followers.

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the sample and obtained clusters. To determine differences between clusters, χ^2-tests and t-tests were used respectively for nominal and interval data to test the noted hypotheses:

H1: Leadership potential in students is not related to the year level.

H2: Leadership potential in students is not related to the program of study.

H3: The effect of socio-demographic factors on leadership potential is significant.

H4: Students with higher scores on leadership traits will rate leadership-related traits as more important in the workplace.

H5: The effect of leadership potential on career development factors and success indicators scores will not be detected.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

2.1. Sample characteristics

The survey was administered to RIT Croatia undergraduate students through a combination of face-to-face distribution of questionnaires and online distribution via Google form. Atypical cases were deleted. There were 339 valid surveys, the sample being predominantly female, 53%, with the majority of participants in their first year

of college, 40.2% (Table 1). In terms of the program of study, the sample expectedly approximates the program choices in the population, with the majority of students, 61%, enrolled in the International Business program (IB), followed by International Hospitality and Service Management (IHSM), 35%, and Information Technology (IT), 4%, respectively (Table 1). Additional socio-demographic data is available in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample Characteristics

Gender	**Female** **Male**	**53.4 %** **46.6 %**
Academic Program	IT IHSM IB	4.4 % 34.8% 60.8 %
Year	Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior	40.2 % 28.1 % 13.9 % 17.8 %
Where did you grow up?	Rural area or a town City with a population lesser than a million City with a population greater than a million	22.7 % 64.3 % 13.0 %
Where do you study?	In my home town Outside of my home town	44.8 % 55.2 %
How many times have you moved/ changed place of residence?	Once Twice Three times Four times Five or more times I have not moved.	27.2% 17.2% 16.6% 9.8% 9.5% 19.8%
Career decision	Preschool period Primary school High school College I have yet to determine a direction.	0.6 % 12.2 % 53.6 % 15% 17.4 %

Source: The authors' research

2.2. Cluster analysis of student leadership characteristics

As previously noted, applied cluster analysis procedure yielded two major groups of students based on their scores on Samardžija's (2013) optimal leadership characteristics scale. Cluster 1, named Followers, was characterized by students who received lower ratings on all of the items on the leadership characteristics scale than Cluster 2, named Potential Future Leaders.

It is easily seen that the Potential Future Leaders self-report higher in all the leadership characteristics. One interesting observation, however, is that they largely have the same strongest and weakest rated characteristics. When viewing the highest and lowest scoring characteristics in both clusters, it is revealed that in both cases, i.e. highest and lowest, the two clusters share four out of five (highest and lowest) characteristics. This suggests, then, that the clusters are

Table 2. Cluster analysis of student leadership characteristics

Leadership characteristics (bipolar descriptions)	**Cluster 1 Followers**		**Cluster 2 Potential Future Leaders**	
Scale **1 2 3 4 5 6 7**	**M (SD)**		**M (SD)**	
Lazy - Hard-working	3.76	1.46	5.5	1.19
Quitter - Persistent	4.74	1.27	6.08	0.92
Not ambitious - Ambitious	5.17	1.32	6.48	0.74
Have no eye for business opportunities - Have an eye for business opportunities	4.63	1.23	5.92	0.91
Inconsistent - Consistent	4.65	1.25	5.89	0.89
Inert - Proactive	4.51	1.11	5.75	1
Unscrupulous - Conscientious	4.47	1.27	5.7	1.07
Doesn't track competitors´ actions - Tracks competitors´ actions	4.43	1.41	5.66	1.17
Not concerned about social inequality - Concerned about social inequality	4.59	1.53	5.81	1.19
Unfocused - Focused	4.42	1.21	5.63	1.08
Not improving skills - Always improving skills	5.11	1.05	6.27	0.77
Insincere - Sincere	4.89	1.27	5.97	0.91
Talentless - Talented	4.64	1.45	5.68	1.11
Does not consider 'the big picture' - Considers 'the big picture'	5.2	1.23	6.24	0.84
Does not plan strategically - Plans strategically	4.75	1.34	5.78	1.12
Not success-oriented - Success-oriented	5.33	1.27	6.35	0.83
Incompetent - Competent	5.03	1.11	6.02	0.84
Immoral - Moral	5.15	1.36	6.12	0.95
Uncompetitive - Competitive	4.88	1.33	5.84	1.12
Does not learn from mistakes - Learns from mistakes	5.36	1.25	6.31	0.91
Not physically active - Physically active	4.78	1.53	5.73	1.28
Willing to have a monologue - Willing to have a dialogue	4.5	1.47	5.43	1.4
Unintuitive - Intuitive	4.99	1.03	5.91	0.9
Negative attitude - Positive attitude	5.04	1.52	5.93	1.14
Non-profit oriented - Profit oriented	4.81	1.44	5.7	1.24
Uninfluential - Influential	4.57	1.13	5.45	1.12
Does not know how to motivate others - Knows how to motivate others	5.11	1.21	5.99	0.98
Non inventive - Innovative	4.89	0.99	5.76	0.98
Physically aggressive - Physically non-aggressive	4.99	1.68	5.83	1.39
Non-genuine - Authentic	4.93	1.17	5.76	0.9
No empathy - Full of empathy	4.79	1.36	5.61	1.28
Does not admit mistakes - Admits mistakes	5.01	1.47	5.8	1.23
No luck - Lucky	4.25	1.51	5.01	1.36
Risk-averse - Risk-taking	4.8	1.23	5.55	1.16
Verbally aggressive - Verbally non-aggressive	4.38	1.6	5.13	1.65
Unprincipled - Principled	5.05	1.08	5.76	0.93
Suspicious - Trusting	4.22	1.57	4.92	1.67
Authoritarian - Liberal	4.26	1.44	4.79	1.48

Source: The authors' research

Table 3. Cluster differences in socio-demographic data

Socio-demographic data	Cluster 2	Cluster 1	χ^2 reported for statistically significant differences. $p<.05$
Gender	Female (55.3 %)	Male (50.4%)	-
Year of College	Freshman (40.7%)	Freshman (39.3%)	-
Where did you grow up?	City with a population lesser than a million	City with a population lesser than a million	-
How many times have you moved (changed place of residence)?	Once (28.4%)	I have never moved (27.4%)	12.39
Program	IB (62.8 %)	IB (56.6 %)	-
Reported age of self-reliance	11-14 (32 %)	15-18 (35.7 %)	-
Reported time of career decision	High school (54.6%)	High school (51.5%)	-

Source: The authors' research

quite similar (in terms of their strengths and weaknesses, with the main difference between them being that the Potential Future Leaders self-report higher scores in these (and all other) characteristics.

While it is interesting to note that both clusters largely share the same sets of top strengths and weaknesses, it is telling to identify those characteristics that are the most different between the two clusters. Lazy-Hardworking, Quitter-Persistent, and Not Ambitious-Ambitious, characteristics that speak of one's work ethic and attitude, are the pairings with the greatest differences (as determined by comparing mean values) between the two clusters: 1.74, 1.34, and 1.31 respectively. Note that the difference in the Lazy-Hardworking characteristic is quite substantial. Students who identify themselves as Potential Future Leaders see themselves as hard-working. These three characteristics are arguably critical to the success of leaders and provide a clear determination as to the difference between the two clusters.

2.3. The socio-demographic data, including education level and program (cluster differences)

The findings associated with Table 3 include a number of intriguing points. Although one might suspect or argue that international business students, potential future 'Captains of Industry', might be more likely to exhibit stronger and more numerous leadership characteristics than hospitality students, one would be mistaken as that was not the case; as expected, International Business students were not found to comprise a significantly greater portion of the Potential Future Leaders cluster.

As another expected finding, generation (or year of study at the college) as a variable does not significantly differentiate students as potential leaders. In other words, fourth year students are not statistically significantly more likely to possess optimal leadership characteristics vis-à-vis first year students.

In terms of other socio-demographic data (Table 3), the only significant difference between the two obtained clusters regarded the change in place of residence, with the majority of Followers reporting to have never changed their place of residence (27.4%, Cluster 1), as opposed to the Potential Future Leaders, who have changed their place of residence once (28.4%) or even three times (20%); $\chi^2(5, N=338)=12.39$, $p<.05$.

This research also suggests that Potential Future Leaders are not more focused on their careers than Followers in that both clusters largely make their career decisions during the same time frame, i.e. high school. This result supports the empirical evidence that leaders are not restricted to or concentrated in any given field or industries; leaders do not gravitate toward a specific career at an early age, but, rather, develop characteristics that are transferable across fields.

2.4. Ratings of the importance of specific leadership personality traits (sample and cluster differences)

In terms of the importance of specific personality traits for being an optimal leader (Table 4), students surveyed rated openness to experience, i.e. being inventive and curious rather that cautious and consistent as the most important characteristic for leadership (*M=3.76, SD=1.27*), and agreeableness was rated as least important (*M=3.15, SD=1.26*).

There were two significant differences noted between the obtained clusters (Table 5). Most of the students (32.4%) identified as Followers gave the rating of 3 (on a 1 to 5 scale) to emotional stability, while the majority of their counterparts (38,1 %) with higher leadership potential, Future Potential Leaders, gave this trait the highest rating of 5 (on a 1 to 5 scale), $\chi^2(4, N=337)=10.71$, $p<.05$.

This result pertaining to emotional stability is not surprising as Potential Future Leaders self-report having more empathy, being more willing to have a dialogue, and being more conscientious. Moreover, the aforementioned characteristics are representative of the five elements of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2010). As research (Goleman, 2010) has shown that leaders score high in the area of emotional intelligence, it is not surprising to see that the Potential Future Leaders score significantly different that Followers in this trait.

A second significant difference was found between the two clusters in the area of the importance of specific personality traits for an optimal leader; namely, a substantial number of students (24.1%) in the Followers cluster gave a rating of 3 to openness to experience, which marked a significant difference in ratings when compared to their counterparts, Future Potential Leaders, with more leadership potential, $\chi^2(4, N=338)=13.24$, $p<.05$. Again, the results of

Table 4.Ratings of importance of specific leadership personality traits (sample)

	Sample M (SD)
Openness to experience: (inventive/curious vs. consistent/cautious).	3.76 (1.27)
Emotional stability (Neuroticism): (sensitive/nervous vs. secure/confident).	3.64 (1.27)
Conscientiousness: (efficient/organized vs. easy-going/careless).	3.57 (1.24)
Extraversion: (outgoing/energetic vs. solitary/reserved).	3.23 (1.26)
Agreeableness: (friendly/compassionate vs. analytical/detached).	3.15 (1.26)

Source: The authors' research

this analysis correspond to the characteristics self-reported by Potential Future Leaders, as they report being more curious about finding ("eyeing") business opportunities, proactive, aware of what competitors' are doing, and considerate of "the big picture"; characteristics reflective of individuals who are open to new experiences.

2.5. Career development factors (sample and cluster differences)

As seen in Table 6, with regard to career development factors, the students surveyed in this study rated love for one's job and calling as the most important factor for progress in their future careers (*M*=6.40, *SD*=1.01), followed by a lucrative job position (*M*=6.06, *SD*=1.03), and financial security (*M*=6.06, *SD*=1.11). Interestingly, remaining in a company in which they could learn from those more experienced received the lowest rating (*M*=4.53, *SD*=1.57), followed by a job position of high status and prestige (*M*=4.70, *SD*=1.56).

Unexpectedly, differences were noted among the Potential Future Leaders and Followers with regard to ratings assigned to

Table 5.Ratings of importance of specific leadership personality traits (cluster differences)

	Cluster 2	**Cluster 1**	χ^2 **reported for statistically significant differences.** $p<.05$
Openness to experience: (inventive/ curious vs. consistent/cautious).	5 (37.6%) 3 (12.4%)*	5 (30.4%) 3 (24.1%)*	13.24
Emotional stability (Neuroticism): (sensitive/nervous vs. secure/confident).	5 (38.1%)*	3 (32.4%)*	10.71

Source: The authors' research

Table 6. Career development factors (sample)

	Sample Descriptives	
Career development factors with highest ratings (scale from 1 to 7)	M	SD
Love for one's job and profession	6.40	1.01
Lucrative job position	6.06	1.03
Stability and financial security	6.06	1.11
Work-family life balance	5.96	1.28
Supervisor's trust and support	5.94	1.13
Career development factors with lowest ratings (scale from 1 to 7)	*M*	*SD*
Aspiration to climb the corporate ladder	5.59	1.42
Opportunity to make the world a better place, improve and serve the society	5.51	1.49
Leadership/management job position opportunities	5.47	1.35
A job position of high social status and prestige	4.70	1.56
Working (remaining) in a company among older and more experienced	4.53	1.57

Table 7. Career development factors (cluster differences)

	Cluster 2		Cluster 1		Cluster comparison
Career development factors with highest ratings (scale from 1 to 7)	M	SD	M	SD	t**
Love for one's job and profession	6.57	.84	6.08	1.22	3.83*
Lucrative job position	6.23	.89	5.75	1.19	3.74*
Stability and financial security	6.24	1.03	5.77	1.13	3.81
Work-family life balance	6.13	1.17	5.70	1.36	2.91*
Supervisor's trust and support	6.14	1.00	5.58	1.25	4.16*
Career development factors with lowest ratings (scale from 1 to 7)	M	SD	M	SD	t**
Aspiration to climb the corporate ladder	5.77	1.41	5.24	1.36	3.29
Opportunity to make the world a better place, improve and serve society	5.73	1.46	5.09	1.48	3.83
Leadership/management job position opportunities	5.71	1.22	4.97	1.45	4.59*
* Satterthwaite approximation employed due to unequal group variances. ** p<.005					

Source: The authors' research

specific career development factors (Table 7). Differences between clusters were noted in the factors which received higher ratings overall, with students with more leadership potential rating these with higher grades. For those career development factors perceived least important overall, differences were also detected between the two clusters, except in the next to last two lowest rated factors. For these two factors, ratings reported by stu-dents Followers and Potential Future Lead-ers were equally low.

Sample respondents displayed an interesting blend of career development factors, exhibiting a 'want it all' attitude. Not only do they desire careers that they love, but these careers should be considered 'safe' (stable) and offer high levels of compensation. These top three factors are closely followed by inter-personal considerations of family (work-life balance) and professional relationships (supervisor's trust and support).

Equally distinctive are those factors rated lowest. The respondents do not seek recognition via traditional markers such as holding high-ranking positions within a firm or becoming prominent in a community, having social status. Perhaps, then, as has been noted in millennials, the respondents are confident in themselves and their abilities and neither desire nor need these survey's traditional external forms of validation, relying instead on their internal considerations of self.

The lowest rated career development factor, to be part of an older and more experienced company than oneself, merits special consideration. Intuitively, at least among non-millennials, one might consider

it a benefit to be able to be a part of an older and more experienced organization as this provides valuable learning opportunities. However, it is possible that a combination of millennial traits render this possible benefit obsolete: millennials confidence and connectedness. As millennials are very self-confident and supremely adept at using technology to gain answers and knowledge almost instantaneously (Smith & Nichols, 2015), it is conceivable that they do not feel the need to work in an older, more experienced environment, relying instead upon themselves.

2.6. Success indicators (sample and cluster differences)

Success indicators which received the highest ratings overall were well-being (*M*=6.51, *SD*.99), being able to ensure college education for one's children (*M*=6.50, *SD*=.95), having a satisfied team of employees (*M*=6. 04, *SD*=1.09), and having a positive impact on society (*M*=5.67, *SD*=1.44), while the least important success indicators were being discussed in the media (M=3.16, SD=1.76), the amount of real-estate one owns (M=3.08, SD=1.76), being part of policy making (M=2.95, SD=1.66), and the number of cars owned (M=2.68, SD=1.78) (Table 8).

In terms of the differences between Potential Future Leaders and Followers, scores exhibited similar patterns as the previous question, as the ratings of students with more leadership potential were higher for success indicators marked as most important than the ratings of students with lesser leadership potential (Table 9). Conversely, there were no significant differences between the two clusters when evaluating the least important success indicators: being discussed in the media (M=3.16, SD=1.76), the amount of real-estate one owns (M=3.08, SD=1.76), being part of policy making (M=2.95, SD=1.66), and the number of cars owned (M=2.68, SD=1.78) (Table 8). Note that while there were differences between the two clusters in terms of the lowest rated career development factors, no such differences exist when success indicators are considered. Both clusters are equally dismissive of material goods, media exposure, and civic engagement as success indicators.

Table 8. Success indicators (sample)

	Sample Descriptives	
Success indicators with highest ratings (scale from 1 to 7)	**M**	**SD**
Having good health.	6.51	.99
Enabling my children to obtain a college level of education.	6.50	.95
A satisfied team of employees.	6.04	1.09
Leaving a positive mark on the society; making the world a better place.	5.67	1.44
Success indicators with lowest ratings (scale from 1 to 7)	**M**	**SD**
Being discussed in the media.	3.16	1.76
The amount of real estate or properties I own.	3.08	1.75
Being part of government policy making.	2.95	1.66
The number of cars that I have.	2.68	1.78

Source: The authors' research

Table 9. Success indicators (cluster differences)

	Cluster 2		Cluster 1		Cluster comparison
Success indicators with highest ratings (scale from 1 to 7)	**M**	**SD**	**M**	**SD**	**t****
Having good health.	6.68	.83	6.21	1.16	3.81*
Enabling my children to obtain a college level of education.	6.69	.67	6.18	1.19	4.24*
A satisfied team of employees.	6.28	.91	5.57	1.26	5.39*
Leaving a positive mark on the society; making the world a better place.	5.91	1.43	5.20	1.38	4.34
* Satterthwaite approximation employed due to unequal group variances. ** p<.001					

Source: The authors' research

As already noted, among the sample's top success indicators, the Potential Future Leaders cluster responded significantly higher than did the Followers cluster (Table 7). In one line of thinking, this makes sense; for example, one would expect that a leader would be more concerned about having a satisfied team or leaving a positive mark on the society than a non-leader (non-leaders let leaders concern themselves with a team's and society's health). Potential Future Leaders seem to be more concerned about their health and their children's education. It might be that Potential Future Leaders are, as indicated in Table 2, more focused than Followers, and, as such, have given more thought to their futures and associated success factors, thus, responding more strongly.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1. Summary of empirical findings

"Despite the large body of research on leadership and leadership behaviors, it is noteworthy that little research exists with regard to the experience of developing young adults to be leaders" (Karagianni & Montgomery, 2017:3). This paper attempts to take a step in addressing this stated lack of research.

Leadership potential is a dynamic category and is reinforced during the job training and after college, but the most extensive period of development includes situational and experiential learning; therefore, student characteristics could develop later in a number of different situations depending dominantly on the personal endeavors but also on potential opportunities. Therefore, leadership potential can be detected but not fully developed at an early age because later on the job requirements challenge and develop those skills. Ibarra et al. (2014) suggest that although leadership may never be permanently acquired at any single institution, preparing people to conduct that work, especially in novel and anxiety-provoking circumstances, may enhance their capacity and broaden their opportunities to lead. Petriglieri et al. (2011) claim that one gains leadership by balancing personalization and contextualization, where personalization is a process through which people are able

to "examine their experience and revisit their life story as part and parcel of learning to lead". Contextualization is a process through which people examine the needs and aspirations of the groups on whose behalf they lead and acquire (Starkey & Tempest, 2009).

This study, using Samardžija's (2013) leadership characteristics, strove to determine profiles of a four-year private college student population. This leader trait research has focused on the special traits distinguishing Potential Future Leaders from Followers. Adding dynamics to leader trait theories can exceed the limitations of existing research and effectively promote the development of leader trait research. This study added dynamics to the static leadership trait theory by taking the situational and progressive perspectives of students simultaneously. Additionally, the study examined what, if any, significant differences exist between identified clusters based on socio-demographic data, importance of specific leadership personality traits, career development factors, and success indicators. The aim of this exploratory study was to examine the potential sources of such differences, and thus determine the path for further research in leadership trait development, yielding an insight regarding the experiences and attitudes that distinguish students as more leadership prone.

The administered questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part was a forty-two item, seven-point side-by-side matrix scale resulting from analyses of interviews conducted with prominent leaders in Croatia (Samardžija, 2013). The second part consisted of two sets of seven-point side-by-side matrix scale items in which students were required to report their attitude regarding the level of importance of specific career development factors and indicators of one's success. This section also includes a ranking item in which students were required to rate the importance of specific personality traits for effective leadership. The third part was a set of nominal scale items: demographic characteristics, reported self-reliance socialization pattern, career focus attainment, and opinions about success.

The following hypotheses, framed through secondary research, were tested:

H1: Leadership potential in students is not related to the year level.

H2: Leadership potential in students is not related to the program of study.

H3: The effect of socio-demographic factors on leadership potential is significant.

H4: Students with higher scores on leadership traits will rate leadership-related traits as more important in the workplace.

H5: The effect of leadership potential on career development factors and success indicators scores will not be detected.

The effect of year level and college program on students' reported leadership scores (H1, H2), as expected, was not recorded. Potential Student Leaders did not differ from their Follower counterparts regarding the program of study or the year level. This seems to confirm the existent line of thought in terms of the effect that progressing through educational system has on development of leadership traits. Students are not simply molded into leaders by educators (Doh, 2003), and further practice and development in the workplace is needed (Allen et al., 2014). If anything, the results seem to further support the empirical insight that leaders are not restricted to or concentrated in any given field or industries; leaders

do not gravitate toward a specific career at an early age, nor are they currently being shaped by the program of choice, but, rather, they develop characteristics that are transferable across fields in either.

It might be that the positive aspects of a college experience in regards to enhancing leadership characteristics are countered by the previously not understood (by students) reality that the business world is much more challenging than anticipated, reducing students' self-reported scores of leadership characteristics (in short, as freshman, ignorance is bliss). On the other hand, it could be that, according to Bornstein (1989), the effects of early influences need not be seen immediately, and may only become easily observed in adulthood.

When considering other socio-demographic factors (H3) in terms of differences between Potential Future Leaders and Followers, one observes that only one of the analyzed is significantly different. Gender, place of residence, time in one's life when one makes a career decision, and age at which one became self-reliant do not significantly affect whether or not one will have stronger or weaker leadership characteristics; however, having moved at least once in one's life was revealed as a difference between the two clusters, with Potential Future Leaders being more exposed to such an experience.

In terms of rating the importance of five specific leadership characteristics (H4), the Potential Future Leaders were found to value Emotional Stability and Openness to Experience more than the Followers cluster. Intriguingly, no other significant differences were noted between the two clusters. In a partial rejection of H4, Potential Future Leaders did not more significantly identify the top two leadership personality traits, Extraversion and Conscientiousness better than Followers. This seems to suggest that those students identified as Followers do report such traits to be equally important, yet mark themselves as less equipped with some of the leadership-related characteristics.

With regard to career development factors and success indicators scores (H5), as expected, students seem to agree on which factors and indicators are more and less important. In terms of career development factors, the students rated love for one's job and calling as the most important factor for progress in their future careers. While students do seem to report a specific 'want it all' attitude, this study's results do mirror prior studies on millennials in that they greatly value a work / life balance (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010) and meaningful relationship with their bosses, desiring caring bosses (Andert, 2011) who trust them and do not impose a number of rules and conditions upon them (Nafei, Kaifi, & Khanfar, 2012). Interestingly, remaining in a company in which they could learn from those more experienced received the lowest rating, followed by a job position of high status and prestige.

Success indicators which received the highest ratings overall were well-being and being able to ensure college education for one's children, while the least important success indicators were being part of policy making and the number of cars owned.

There is a certain nuance associated with respondents' scores for success indicators as compared to their career development indicators. While a lucrative job position is a top career development factor, respondents shun overt displays of the rewarding compensation of such a position. Respondents, then, desire financial rewards to be part of their career paths, but they do not intend to flaunt their wealth.

Respondents' top-rated success indicator, well-being or having good heath, should come as no surprise given that students identified work-family life balance as one of their top career development factors. Conceivably, work-family life balance would positively assist the development of overall good health. Additionally, other research has posited that millennials have a strong desire for work-life balance as opposed to focusing primarily on their careers (Smith & Nichols, 2015).

In an apparent possible contradiction in responses, survey participants stated that leaving a positive mark is important to them as an indicator of their success, but also indicated that the opportunity to make society better was not an important career development factor. From a societal standpoint, it is somewhat troubling to see that this sample holds little regard for improving and serving society. Is this because they truly are the 'Look at Me' generation (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010), focused on themselves and not concerned with others, or is this an artifact of where the respondents are in their careers; as most of them have not yet really embarked on their careers it could be that they are more focused on themselves and beginning their careers than society in general?

Differences in career development factors between the two clusters were not expected, but the results indicate that such differences do exist. Although respondents seem to agree on what is important and unimportant, the strength of their attitude differs. Among the sample's highest rated career development factors, the Potential Future Leaders cluster was found to consider love for one's job, high-paying employment, stability and financial security, work-life balance, and trust and support of a supervisor as more important than the Followers cluster. Additionally, among the lowest rated career development factors, the Potential Future Leaders cluster expressed a significantly greater desire to advance in a company, to make the world and society a better place, and to have management opportunities available to them than the Followers cluster did. Such differences were not detected between the two clusters in the sample's two lowest scored career development factors, having a job with high social status and prestige and working for a firm with older and more experienced employees than the respondents are.

A similar pattern emerges in the results regarding success indicators, with significant differences detected between the two clusters on the top-scored success factors, i.e. with Potential Leaders marking these as more important. No differences were detected in the lowest scored success indicators, meaning the two clusters were equally disdainful of these lowly rated success factors associated with material gain and media exposure.

In short, it seems that, even though the students surveyed, as expected, display some of the features and attitudes associated with millennials generally speaking, the important career development factors and important success indicators are somehow of more relevance to the leadership prone.

3.1. Limitations and future research

One limitation of this study was that it did not look into specific differences among students in terms of courses attended, experiential learning and training experiences. Namely, if leadership traits are not spurred by a mere transition through the educational system or enhanced in specific programs of study, perhaps there is an effect to be recorded in terms of specific general education or professional courses and co-op practices that the student population was exposed to. Further research along those lines, if such an

effect is to be recorded, might indicate the importance of cooperative education, and the impact of efforts to produce well-rounded individuals through a diverse offer of general education and professional courses in the curriculum. Such research might reconcile the findings of this study with insights that education tends to be recorded as an important influencing factor over the formation and evolution of leader traits (Brady, 1948; Mitra, 2006), and the notion that individuals can gain fundamental knowledge and intelligence from education, which affects leadership potential.

A further limitations of this study is that in adulthood, at approximately 22 years of age, individuals are more autonomous than at any other point in their lives in terms of work roles, duties and career with the external organizations and institutions with which they engage, and vulnerable to the impact of major events. However, note that those in power can also create events to help these individuals achieve their objectives (Kegan, 1982). Therefore, practice is very important in this period (Colvin, 2008). It would be useful to extend research and include the RIT Croatia Alumni society to detect even stronger homogenous groups of leaders and effects of curriculum and extracurricular activities on their future leadership potential and, subsequently, career development.

One path for further research pertains to developing leadership potential. Namely, if the experience of being exposed to a new environment (moving) is related to leadership qualities, then the further step is to investigate the impact of studying outside of the place of residence or participation in a study abroad program (variables not recorded in the present study) on the development of such characteristics.

The result that Followers, for the most part, were not significantly different from the Potential Future Leaders regarding the identification of important workplace leadership characteristics suggests a further question to be explored; namely, whether this is reflected in some sort of dissatisfaction with their own characteristics, i.e. potential lack of confidence that they will excel in the workplace in their respective careers. Such an insight might help the faculty, academic and cooperative education advisers in guiding these students toward the career path of their choice, and enable them to develop the traits that they perceive as important in the work setting.

Further studies in this area should look into a potential reverse impact; namely, investigate whether a change in attitudes (i.e. making students more passionate about the perceived indicators of success, or more aware of the importance of specific career development factors) could bring about a more leadership-oriented attitude overall.

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RAZVOJ KARIJERE I OSOBNI PROFIL USPJEHA STUDENATA – SLJEDBENIKA I STUDENATA - POTENCIJALNIH BUDUĆIH VOĐA: STUDIJA SLUČAJA RIT CROATIA

Sažetak

U ovom se radu istražuju razlike između studenata u smislu samostalne procjene karakteristika vodstva. Istraživanje je provedeno u okviru svih triju programa i četiriju generacija preddiplomskih studenata na RIT Croatia. Cilj rada je utvrditi razlike između studenata, koji se identificiraju kao više, odnosno manje skloni vođenju (potencijalnih budućih vođa, odnosno sljedbenika), s obzirom na demografske karakteristike, samostalno procijenjene razine samostalnosti i socijalizacije, razinu studija i izbor studijskog programa, stjecanje i razvoj karijere, značaj specifičnih čimbenika i pokazatelja razvoja karijere te procjenu značaja osobnih crta za vodstvo. Rezultati istraživanja ukazuju da generacijska pripadnost i izbor studijskog programa nisu povezani sa samostalno procijenjenom sklonosti vođenju, što sugerira da djelovanje visokog obrazovanja na osobine vođenje nije značajno. Samo se jedan socio-demografski čimbenik izdvojio kao značajno različit između različitih skupina. Naime, studenti koji su se barem jednom selili, bili su u značaj-

no većoj mjeri uvršteni u skupinu potencijalnih budućih vođa, što ukazuje da bi programi studija u inozemstvu mogli doprinositi razvoju vodstva. Potencijalni budući vođe su, u odnosu na sljedbenike, od čimbenika i pokazatelja razvoja karijere, postigli više rezultate u emocionalnoj stabilnosti i otvorenosti prema novim iskustvima, što potencijalno proizlazi iz njihovih stavova, usmjerenih prema budućnosti i ostvarivanju ciljeva.

Ključne riječi: *karakteristike vodstva, profil studentskog vodstva, razvoj studenata, razvoj karijere, osobni uspjeh*